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Annual report of the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21)

Note by the Secretary-General

As requested by the Commission at its thirty-second session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission the annual report of the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21). The report provides the Commission with an update on the PARIS 21 programme of subregional workshops and country follow-up; notes the decisions on the structure, financing and location of PARIS 21; shows the work programme for 2002 and 2003 to broaden and deepen the work of PARIS 21; and notes the evaluation of its achievements proposed for 2003. The Commission may wish to consider:

(a) Its involvement in the work of PARIS 21;

(b) Tailoring the work programme of PARIS 21 to meet the call of the Economic and Social Council for more attention to statistical capacity-building and better coordination between agencies.

* E/CN.3/2002/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 4* (E/2001/24, para. 45 (d)).

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Annual report of the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21)*

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* Statistical Commission documents referred to in the present report are available at www.un.org/Depts/unsd/statcom/sc2001.htm; other papers/meeting reports are available at www.PARIS21.org.

The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21) is a unique partnership of national, regional and international statisticians, policy makers, development professionals and other users of statistics, including civil society. It has been established as a global forum and network to promote, influence and facilitate statistical capacity-building activities and the better use of statistics. PARIS 21 is not itself an operational agency. It acts as a catalyst, building on existing work and processes. It has a secretariat of six people, based in the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) in Paris, and an annual expenditure of US$ 1.5 to 2 million. Its work is guided by an annual meeting and a Steering Committee of representatives of developing and transition countries, donors and international organizations. It is co-chaired by a member of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission and the Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

I. Background

1. PARIS 21 was launched at a meeting in Paris in November 1999 in response to an Economic and Social Council resolution on rationalizing and improving statistics and indicators. The goals and targets of various United Nations summits and major conferences, including the new millennium development goals, place poverty reduction, broadly defined, at the centre of development policy. The need for better statistics has been recognized not only to monitor progress towards the goals of various United Nations summits and major conferences but also to provide a sound basis both to design and implement development policies in order to achieve them.

2. The first annual progress report of PARIS 21 was submitted to the Statistical Commission on 8 March 2001 (see E/CN.3/2001/24). It covered the background, objectives, work programme, management, governance and reporting of PARIS 21, and the next steps for PARIS 21. The report invited members of the Commission to discuss how PARIS 21 could best meet the objectives of Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/55 on mobilizing resources and coordinating efforts to support national statistical capacity-building in developing and transition countries; how to involve the Commission in its meetings and governance; and how to use the annual report to exchange information and promote coordination.

3. The report noted that many members of the Commission had voiced strong support for the initiative and its objective of strengthening cooperation for statistical capacity-building, that the Commission had noted the need for further discussions on the work programme, structure, financing and location of PARIS 21, and that some delegations had suggested that the integration of the tasks of PARIS 21 into the United Nations system be investigated (see E/CN.3/2001/24, para. 45 (d)).

4. The issues noted for further discussion helped to prompt a "Friends of the Chair PARIS 21 process", which reported to the PARIS 21 Interim Steering Committee in June 2001. The Committee agreed on the goals and modalities of PARIS 21 and on light governance arrangements, independently of the governance of trust funds that finance PARIS 21-inspired activities. It agreed that the secretariat should remain in Paris for the foreseeable future, but with closer links to the United Nations. It asked for the task teams to be put on a firmer footing with the reports, plans and budgets submitted to Steering Committee and annual PARIS 21 meetings. It agreed on the work programme and financing plans for 2001 to 2003, and also agreed that the PARIS 21 process would be evaluated in 2003, with an interim review in 2002. A paper on behalf of developing country members of PARIS 21 noted the strengths of PARIS 21 to be its wide stakeholder involvement, equal voice for all members and neutral secretariat.

5. The present report provides an update on the goals, scope and activities of PARIS 21, its future work programme, financing, organization and evaluation.

II. Goals and outputs

6. The PARIS 21 goals are to contribute to more effective poverty reduction and improved transparency, accountability and effectiveness of governance in developing and transition countries, inter alia, to help achieve the goals of various United Nations summits and major conferences. It works through advocacy, information exchange and partnership, in support of:

- Increased political support, funding and demand for statistical information systems;
- Integration of statistical capacity-building into national development strategies and as a foundation for effective evidence-based policy-making, management and monitoring;
- Comprehensive strategies to strengthen and sustain capacity to produce, analyse and use statistics and other information;
- More effective user-producer dialogue processes and improved collaboration between all partners undertaking and assisting statistical activities, in particular recognizing the mutual roles and needs of policy makers and national statistical offices;
- Application of PARIS 21 partnership principles[1] and United Nations guidelines for technical cooperation for statistics.

7. The aim is to create synergy between the activities of PARIS 21 and the direct statistical capacity-building activities of partner agencies through a "virtual" programme — stimulated by PARIS 21 goals and following partnership principles that put countries in control through global and regional action responding to individual country needs.

III. Scope

8. PARIS 21 aims to help to develop adequately resourced, well managed and sustainable statistical systems and their use. One short-term aim of PARIS 21 is to encourage statistical capacity-building programmes in highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) and other countries developing poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs), which effectively encompasses all countries eligible for concessional funding. Statistics need to be used to inform the design of poverty reduction strategies as well as their implementation, monitoring and updating, requiring continuing development of relevant statistical information and its wider use.

9. But while PRSPs are an important entry point, they do not impose a boundary on PARIS 21 activities. One challenge that is being addressed is to secure wider agreement to the principles and goals of PARIS 21, and to enable non-PRSP countries to follow and benefit from that approach.

IV. Activities

10. Since its foundation in November 1999, PARIS 21 has been presented at a number of international meetings and thereby gathered much support for increased attention to sustainable, holistic approaches to building statistical capacity. Specific activities for 2001 as of September included: two subregional workshops, covering 20 countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and East Africa and the Great Horn; a follow-up workshop in Zambia; a one-day workshop at Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) headquarters, covering some 40 countries; and a number of task team meetings on advocacy, indicators of statistical capacity, statistical strategic planning and population censuses. Those activities are already starting to produce results in line with the goals stated above. At the annual PARIS 21 meeting, held on 4 and 5 October 2001, participants heard examples of effective dialogues between users and producers that had generated more political support for statistics and attention to the statistical capacity required for monitoring PRSPs in Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mauritania, Uganda and Zambia. They also learned about increased subregional cooperation efforts, particularly by South Africa and Uganda; the transfer of skills and experience that have been successful in one country to others; and the initiation of effective collaboration between partners on new tools and techniques, e.g., poverty mapping. The major activities of PARIS 21 are covered briefly below.

V. Workshops

Southern African Development Community

11. Some 130 people — data users and government statisticians from the 13 SADC countries and bilateral and multilateral donors — attended this first full workshop in Lusaka in December 2000. Each country team produced a plan of action drawing on plenary and country group sessions, which are already being used in the region to influence policy makers, for example, exploring data gaps in major ministries. The meeting noted that the process of producing poverty reduction strategies was encouraging strategic planning for statistical activities involving users and producers. Participants resolved (a) to increase knowledge-sharing between SADC countries, focusing on information strategies, the PRSP process and training programmes; (b) to assist SADC countries in implementing their plans of action through regional coordination and harmonization in poverty monitoring; and (c) to hold a follow-up technical workshop — organized by SADC and the World Bank Trust Fund — to focus on progress with information strategies linked to PRSPs.

12. The workshop has already resulted in increased South-South cooperation, through exchange visits; work to build a regional pool of technical expertise; and eventually an SADC best practice web site. In April 2001, the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) funded a follow-up workshop in Zambia to strengthen dialogue between the major users of statistics in the Zambian PRSP; the workshop recommended shared databases, improving key macroeconomic data, greater capacity for poverty analysis, a strategy for the whole statistical system, and better linkages throughout government and with civil society on poverty monitoring and evaluation.

East Africa and the Great Horn

13. Following a short preparatory workshop on African Statistics Day in November 2000, a full workshop was held in Kampala in July 2001, involving 106 participants from 7 countries, subregional organizations, donor and international organizations. Each country team developed a plan of action, and most proposed to hold workshops for national stakeholders. The workshop found that key to effective programmes of action were: (a) advocacy, including for censuses — with input from PARIS 21 and donors; (b) sharing experience in the subregion through networks and South-South cooperation; (c) continuing user dialogue; (d) better donor coordination; (e) dissemination and media strategies; and (f) local area and community-level data.

Committee on Development Information of the Economic Commission for Africa

14. Taking advantage of some 40 heads of African statistics offices being in Addis Ababa to discuss follow-up to the Addis Ababa Plan of Action, PARIS 21 held a one-day workshop in September 2001, on the theme "Strengthening statistical capacity for poverty monitoring"; the workshop helped to broaden the PARIS 21 message by sharing the best practices identified at the subregional workshops with a wider audience. There was enthusiasm with the process and a strong desire to seize the initiative to improve statistical capacity in Africa, in particular by sharing early experiences of using the impetus of PRSPs to improve dialogue with users. The meeting noted (a) the importance of adopting poverty monitoring plans agreed by all stakeholders, with external assistance to promote the dialogue; (b) the need for strategic statistical plans to be jointly developed by all stakeholders, including planners, civil society, donors and the international community; and (c) that the generation of community-level statistics was facilitated through cost-sharing, for example, when local authorities funded the field costs of surveys in their locality.

VI. Task teams

15. PARIS 21 has five task teams that bring together professionals interested in particular aspects of statistical capacity-building under a volunteer Convenor. There are synergies between the work of each team that the Secretariat aims to maximize.

Advocacy

16. The task team has produced a brochure, poster and web site pages, which, in the coming year, need to be refined and translated, provided to countries to tailor to their needs and distributed through PARIS 21 members with a user guide.

Indicators of statistical capacity-building

17. The objective of the task team is to validate and test indicators for statistical capacity-building. In line with the PARIS 21 approach to build on existing initiatives, the task team uses IMF work on data quality as the starting point from which to develop indicators of statistical capacity. The identified indicators will be grouped under six characteristics: integrity; accessibility; serviceability; methodological soundness; legal and institutional environment; and accuracy and reliability of data sources and statistical techniques.

Strategic statistical development plans

18. The team has assembled some material on good practice in strategic planning for statistics that is being shared through the PARIS 21 web site. It is looking for further examples and will examine the evaluation of strategic plans.

Census

19. The team is organizing specific workshops to raise awareness/reiterate the value of the census as a foundation of a good statistical system and its role in community-level statistics, and to examine more effective and efficient methods that will reduce costs for the next census round.

Agricultural and rural statistics

20. The team was reformed during the October 2001 PARIS 21 meeting to bring together the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank work to seek to strengthen agricultural and rural statistics as a key tool of poverty reduction.

VII. Web site

21. PARIS 21 makes extensive use of its web site (www.PARIS21.org) as a communication and publicity tool. The site is being developed to provide most materials in English, French and Spanish and to provide space for pages relating to subregions — which may also include other languages — following the initial workshops. Its potential to act as a forum for information exchange on statistical capacity-building activities will be piloted in late 2001 and early 2002. The site maintains links to other relevant statistical sites.

VIII. Future work: broadening and deepening

22. The future work of PARIS 21 will concentrate on three main areas: (a) broadening the coverage of the initiative to areas beyond anglophone Africa; (b) deepening the work already started by encouraging bilateral donors and trust funds to assist countries with the action plans developed at the subregional workshops; and (c) completing and disseminating the materials resulting from the task team work.

23. The plans for further subregional "launch" workshops are given in the table. The programme provides for two more workshops in 2001, six in 2002 and two in 2003. The workshops will follow the successful pattern of those for SADC and East Africa and the Great Horn, with continual feedback of lessons into subsequent workshops.

24. The initial workshops are followed by a period of 18 months of follow-up to foster action at the national level, mainly organized by countries and subregional organizations and funded by trust funds and bilateral donors. PARIS 21 assists with materials and resource people, as appropriate.

IX. Financing

25. In the two years since its creation in 1999, PARIS 21 has received contributions of nearly US$ 3 million, of which half has been spent on regional workshops, task team activities, meetings and staff. The balance has been committed to salary costs for four staff/secondees until late 2003 and activities to the end of 2001. Projected expenditure is some US$ 3.4 million to the end of 2003 to fund regional workshops, follow-up activities to promote country-level action, work of task teams, and meetings. About US$ 1 million further funding needs to be secured to meet this programme.

Actual and planned subregional workshops, 2000-2003

	2000	2001				2002				2003			
	Quarter 4	*Quarter 1*	*Quarter 2*	*Quarter 3*	*Quarter 4*	*Quarter 1*	*Quarter 2*	*Quarter 3*	*Quarter 4*	*Quarter 1*	*Quarter 2*	*Quarter 3*	*Quarter 4*
Southern Africa	Regional workshop (SADC)												
East Africa and Great Horn				Regional workshop (Uganda)									
Central and South America			Prepa-ration ECLAC		Andean regional event		Regional event (Carib-bean)		Regional event (Central)				
Commonwealth of Independent States/Central and Eastern European countries					Regional SIS/MISP seminar								
Asia and the Pacific								Regional event		Regional event		Regional event	
Central and West Africa						West Africa regional event	Central Africa regional event						
Arab States								Regional event					

X. Organization

26. The Interim Steering Committee, at its meeting in June 2001, decided that the PARIS 21 secretariat should be strengthened from four staff — two secondees and two assistants — to six. It agreed to the addition of a third secondee and a full-time manager, selected by a panel of members of the Committee and recruited through international advertising. The new manager, who has wide experience of statistical capacity-building within the World Bank and Africa, took up appointment in mid-November 2001. The selection process also led to the funding and appointment of a half-time consultant to help organize and represent PARIS 21 in regional workshops and international events.

27. The Committee also agreed that it would be premature to move the secretariat from Paris to the United Nations in New York at this stage of its existence. Stronger United Nations involvement in PARIS 21 is already evident in its annual reports to the Commission, its three active representatives on the Committee from the United Nations Statistics Division and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), plus the Chair, who is a member of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission, and current cooperation on indicator sets and reporting on progress towards development goals. The structure and location of the PARIS 21 secretariat will be considered, along with the duration of the initiative, in the review scheduled for 2003. A new Committee was elected at the PARIS 21 meeting in October 2001 to serve for the year until October 2002. In addition to the Chair, the Committee comprises six subregional representatives of developing and transition countries, six representatives of donor countries and representatives of the European Commission, IMF, OECD, UNDG, the United Nations Statistics Division and the World Bank.

XI. Evaluation

28. The Steering Committee has agreed that PARIS 21 should be reviewed in full in 2003, with an interim review in 2002. The review will be related to the goals of PARIS 21, including increased political support for statistics, integration of strategies for the production, analysis and use of statistics into national development strategies, a more effective user-producer dialogue and improved collaboration between all partners. The evaluation will measure outcomes directly under the control of the initiative, such as effective funding and implementation of the work plan and use of outputs from task teams, as well as broader ones, such as greater commitment by developing and transition countries to better statistics and by donors to better coordinated statistical capacity-building efforts.

XII. Questions for the Statistical Commission

29. The Statistical Commission may wish to consider the following questions:

- How might the Commission involve itself even more in the work of PARIS 21?
- How can the work programme of PARIS 21 be further tailored to meet the Economic and Social Council's call for more attention to statistical capacity-building and better coordination between agencies?
- What, other information, if any, would the Statistical Commission and the Economic and Social Council like to see in the annual reports of PARIS 21?

30. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the present report, and following its discussion of statistical capacity-building to include the main points in its report to the Economic and Social Council.

Notes

[1] The principles recognize that the people and Governments of developing and transition countries make the most important contribution to development; they emphasize the need for country ownership and leadership, shared long-term international and local commitment, and better coordinated technical cooperation.